Metro launches app to stream free movies, songs, TV serials on trains

Chennai: From March, commuters can board a metro train and watch their favorite movies, songs, or TV serials for free at the touch of a button—thanks to a mobile-based entertainment system to be launched by Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL). CMRL has taken a cue from the inflight entertainment system, but the difference here is that commuters will have to download an app on their smartphones to access the content once they enter a metro station. "We conducted trials in three trains and it was successful," a metro rail official said.

We will launch the service either by the end of March or early April. When we launch, we will perhaps be the first metro rail service in the country to have such a facility," a metro rail official said.

Commuters can access a wide variety of content in four languages—Tamil, Hindi, Telugu, and Malayalam. They can either watch directly on the app or download it and watch it offline within a specific period. To provide the service, metro rail is installing servers at all the stations, trains, and depots. Commuters, upon installing the app, can connect to the server over WiFi and start viewing the content.

The wireless network that will give access to the content will be different from the WiFi. CMRL is planning to provide free Internet access for commuters. The connectivity that comes with the content will work only on the app and cannot be used to browse the Internet, he said.

Official: Commuters can download films in HD quality in seconds

"From P 1"

CMRL recently floated tenders to install and commission wireless network across the 40km phase-1 and 80km phase-2 extensions as well as in its fleet of 12 trains. The WiFi will enable commuters to make Internet calls particularly in underground stations, where there are no mobile network signals, despite winning tenders three years ago.

"A passenger may take only a maximum of one hour to travel from one point to another in the metro network. Now that there is no signal on mobile phones in the underground stations, our new service can keep them entertained," an official said.

The content will be updated almost every day when the trains are brought to the depot for maintenance. The service and the servers in the trains will be synced with the one at the depot.

"For providing such a facility, speed is an important factor. We tested the speed during the trial, and it is the same as around all four coaches of the train. Commuters will be able to download a movie in HD quality in 10 to 15 seconds," an official said. Efforts are afoot to live-stream TV channels through the app."

Continued on P 6